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BRITISH PAINTERS.—HUBERT HERKOMER, A.R.A.



HE name of this painter at once declares his foreign origin. He was born in 1849, at Waal, in Bavaria. His father was a wood carver of considerable ability, who in 1851 emigrated to the United States, but not finding sufficient scope for his talent there, returned to Europe and settled in Southampton, where, at the age of thirteen, his son entered the School of Art, gaining a bronze medal almost immediately.* In 1865 he went to Munich with his father, who had received a commission to execute some figures in wood after the manner of those by Peter Visscher, an eminent German sculptor who flourished in the fifteenth century. Whilst there the youth attracted great notice among the Art circles of the city, Professor Echter doing much to aid him in his studies. In 1866 he was again in England, and entered the schools at South Kensington, but after a few months' residence in the metropolis returned to Southampton, where he was instrumental in establishing a school for drawing from the life. At the end of that year the young artists associated with him opened an exhibition of their works, when Mr. Herkomer sold a picture—the first sale he effected, at least

in England. In 1867 he was once more at South Kensington for a short time, and in 1868 he established himself in the small village of Hythe, near Southampton, where he painted two drawings which were hung the next year in the Dudley Gallery. About this time Mr. Herkomer became connected with the *Graphic*, in which many of his compositions have been published, and consequently returned to London, where he soon acquired a good artistic reputation and numerous friends. To the spring exhibition at the Dudley Gallery in 1870 he sent his drawing entitled 'Hoeing,' which gained considerable attention as the work of a comparatively new hand, though, as we remarked at the time, greatly at fault as a composition, owing to its being too much scattered. In this same year he was in Normandy, where he painted, at Tréport, his 'Reading War News,' which added much to his fame; it was in 1870, too, that there appeared in the *Graphic* an engraving of the first rough draft of his composition, the 'Chelsea Pensioners,' of which he subsequently executed a water-colour drawing for the manager of that paper.

In 1871 Mr. Herkomer was invited to join the Institute of Water-Colour Painters, which he did, with his old friend Mr.



Arrest of a Poacher: Bavarian Alps

E. J. Gregory. Shortly afterwards he passed six months in his native country sketching, but it was some time before the public saw any outcome of his studies. In 1873 he sent his first picture to the Academy, 'After the Toil of the Day;' it was spoken of in this Journal as follows:—"All things considered, it must be placed foremost among the few bright and promising things to be found in Burlington House this season." The scene is a village street, at evening; on one side stands an old inn, at the door of which are gathered toilers of different trades, who now sit and rest after the day; a stream runs through a meadow on the other side; and, nearer to the road,

a young girl is seated on the coping of a well, filling her pail with water; a lad drives a flock of geese down the village street; another girl sits spinning at the doorway of a cottage; and above, in a room under the gable, a figure is seen engaged in some domestic occupation. Such are the materials composing this most attractive picture, which almost involuntarily recalls to mind some of the works of the late Frederick Walker, A.R.A. Its effect is to bring out most clearly the various incidents depicted, and to show each person of the drama in his or her individuality. It was in every way a success.

Mr. Herkomer was now on the highway to prosperity, both in reputation and financially, but he did not again contribute to the Academy till 1875, although in 1873 he exhibited at the winter exhibition of the Institute of Painters in Water

* The writer chanced to be in Southampton at the time, lecturing at the Institute, and remembers perfectly well the name of Mr. Herkomer, whose career he has since carefully watched, as a prize-winner in the School of Art.

Colours a sketch of 'Chelsea Pensioners at Church;' and in the same gallery, in the next year, four works — an unfinished sketch called 'A Fairy Overture,' 'The Miller and the Sweep,' 'The Old Gardener,' and 'Fishing in the Black Forest.' There too, in 1875, appeared 'Im Walde' and 'The Gossips,' two women having a friendly chat over the palings that divide their adjoining gardens or small orchards, the drawing being one of those elaborated works in which an attempt—and by no means an unsuccessful one—is made to give all the strength and richness of oil painting through the

medium of water colours. In the Royal Academy of 1875 hung Mr. Herkomer's noble picture, 'The Last Muster: Sunday at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea,' by which he at once lifted himself into fame; the scene represents a group of army veterans, whose aged and war-worn features, as they are assembled in the College chapel, clearly show that if this is not their "last muster," the final gathering cannot be very long delayed. Though the subject is not pleasing, it is treated artistically in a very masterly manner, and it found a host of admirers; so much so, that it has been stated that when the



The Poacher's Fate.

porters brought it before the Committee of the Royal Academy, weary as they were with a long day spent in judging mediocrity, they could not refrain from clapping their hands in genuine admiration. Some of them, Mr. Richmond and Sir F. Leighton in particular, at once wrote to congratulate the artist. As much in one sense, at least, may be said of Mr. Herkomer's next Academy picture. 'At Death's Door' is very clever, but the subject is not agreeable, and one is tempted to ask why some artists will paint what can only produce pain-

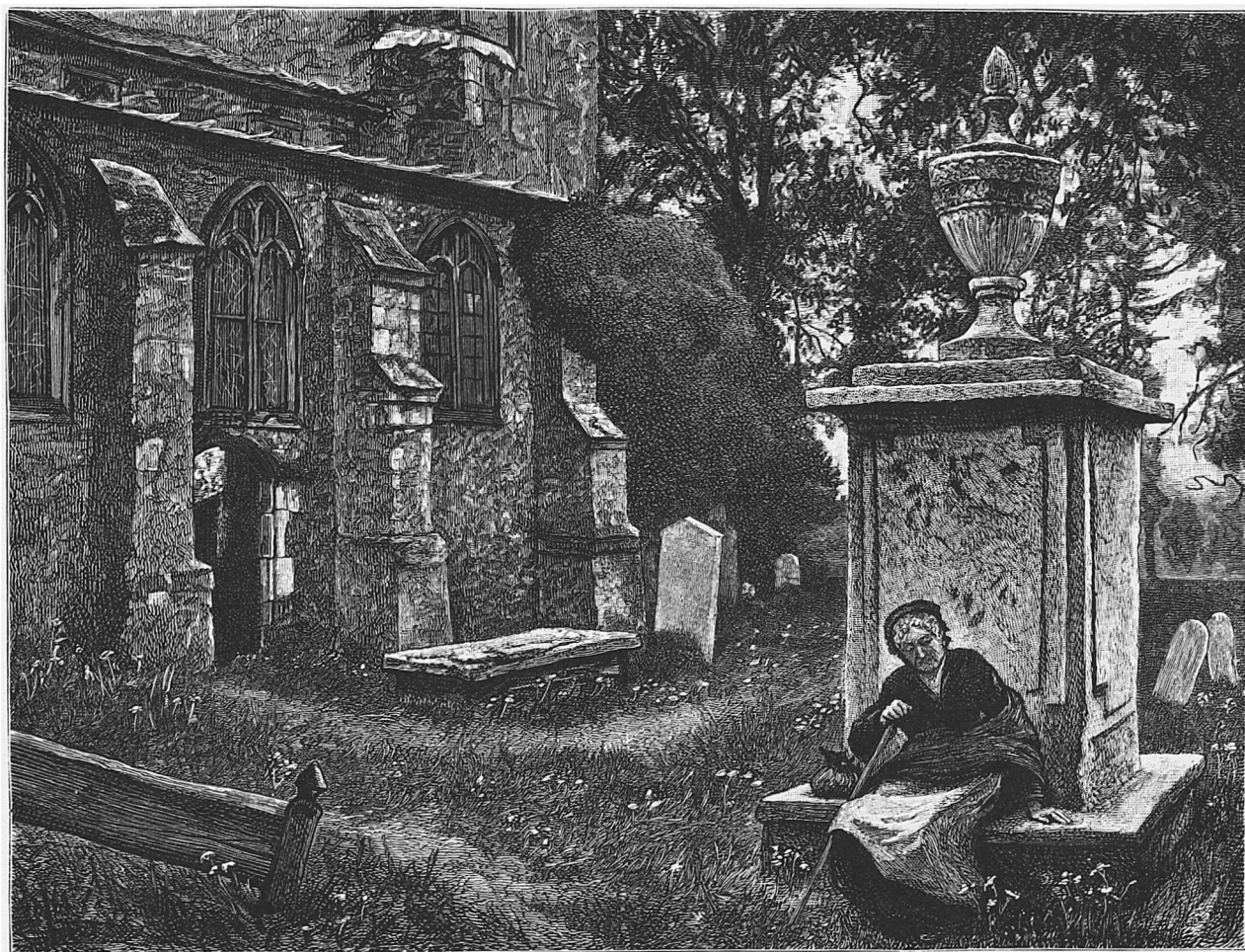
ful feelings. Even to the title of the work in question exception might be taken, and the composition, as a whole, in no way lessens one's repugnance to the theme: it reveals a group of 'Peasants of the Bavarian Alps in prayer, awaiting the arrival of the Priest who is to administer the last rites to a member of the family.' Another Bavarian subject, though of a very different character, Mr. Herkomer sent to the Academy in 1877, 'Der Bittgang,' peasants praying for a successful harvest. He also contributed a fine portrait of Mrs. Henry Mason; but

space forbids us enlarging upon these or his other subsequent productions, except to speak briefly of one of the three contributions to the Academy in 1878, 'Eventide: a Scene in the Westminster Union.' This was a work which gained for him almost, if not quite, as much distinction as did the 'Chelsea Pensioners.' The canvas represents a group of old women taking their tea in a large ward of the St. James's Workhouse. The ancient dames are having a cheerful meal; their furrowed faces wear a happy smile, expressive of enjoyment; and the theme is altogether as natural in execution as it is original in design. Other pictures exhibited at the Academy by Mr. Herkomer have been 'A Welsh Woman,' a 'Souvenir de Rembrandt,' which accompanied the 'Eventide' in 1878, and 'Relating his Adventure,' his last year's single contribution.

The three works we have engraved are from water-colour drawings in the possession of Mr. Fry, of the firm of Messrs.

Elliott and Fry, the well-known photographic artists in Portman Square, London. The latter gentleman, who owns a large number of Mr. Herkomer's water-colour paintings, has very kindly placed at our disposal these productions of his friend and occasional fellow-traveller.

The first, 'ARREST OF A POACHER: BAVARIAN ALPS.' In that highly picturesque region, famed for its romantically grand scenery, abounding with both large and small game, affording strong attractions to sportsmen, and not a few temptations to the ill-disposed male inhabitants of the neighbouring towns and villages, a peasant has been arrested for engaging in the illegal sport of poaching. The story is as vividly told as it is artistically portrayed: each figure in the two separate groups plays a part in it—the stalwart hero, his weeping wife and unconscious little child, the tall *gensdarme*, his somewhat different and grim-looking attendant, and the by no means dignified



Rest: Aldenham Church.

officer who is reading the warrant of arrest to the poacher with deferential timidity, although he has guarded his position by placing himself between the other officials. The man standing with his back to the window is sufficiently ill-favoured in appearance to be the poacher's companion turned informer, while the other, an old man, and their two immediate associates, are evidently listening to the story of the crime that has caused the arrest of "Hans." If a search be instituted, it is to be feared the deer whose antlers project above the balcony, where an old woman, probably his mother, is also seen, will give proof of the prisoner's guilt. The composition is full of life and character, while the picturesque buildings add greatly to its pleasing effect.

The second engraving, 'THE POACHER'S FATE,' may be regarded as a sequel to the former subject; it is, in fact, a continuation of the same incident or story. The love of poaching is said to be so strong and ineradicable in the Bavarian peasantry that the fear of punishment is but a slight prevention, and the tragic event

which the painter has here depicted is by no means rare, for the poacher and the hunter are sworn enemies. The poacher has been shot by a hunter, who carries the intelligence into the neighbouring village. The friends of the wounded man hasten out to ascertain the fact, and discover the body hanging in so perilous a position that they dread to approach it.

'REST: ALDENHAM CHURCH,' is altogether suggestive of a more peaceful state of affairs. The old edifice, which formerly was part of the possessions attached to the Abbey of St. Albans, is a capital specimen of a country parish church of the early English style. Mr. Herkomer has not attempted to make anything more out of the subject than a simple view of a portion of the sacred building and the churchyard, with a few tombs and headstones, the old parishioner seated by one of the former suggesting the title the artist has given to this little bit of naturalism. Mr. Herkomer was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy last year.

JAMES DAFFORNE.